

THE  
HISTORY  
OF

Sir Richard Whittington,

THRICE

Lord Mayor of LONDON.



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The History of  
Sir Richard Whittington.



CHAP. I.

Of Whittington's obscure Birth and hard Fortune; and of his being drove to London.

ONE Richard Whittington, supposed to have been an outcast, for he did not

know his parents, they either dying or leaving him to the parish of Taunton Dean in Somersetshire ; but as he grew up being displeased with the cruel usage of the nurse, he ran away from her at seven years of age, and travelled about the country, living upon the charity of well disposed persons, till he grew up to be a fine sturdy youth ; when at last being threatened to be whippeid if he continued in that idle course of life, he resolved to go to London, having heard that the streets were paved with gold. Not knowing the way, he followed the carrier : and at night, for the little service he did them in rubbing their horses, they gave him a supper. When he arrived in this famous city, the carrier supposing he would be a troublesome hanger on, told him plainly he must leave the inn, and immediately seek out some employment, giving him a groat.—With this he wandered about, but not knowing any one, and being in a tattered garb, some pitied him as a forlorn destitute wretch, but few gave him any thing.

What he had got being soon spent, his stomach craved supply ; but not having

any thing to satisfy it, he resolved rather to starve than steal. — After two hungry days, and living on the bulks at night, weary and faint he got to a merchant's house in Leadenhall-street, where he made many signs of his distressed condition, but the illnatured cook was going to kick him from the door, saying, If you tarry here, I will kick you in the kennel. — This put him almost into despair, so he laid himself down on the ground, being unable to go any farther. In the mean time Mr. Fitz-Warren, whose house it was, came from the Royal Exchange, and seeing him there in that condition, demanded what he wanted ? and sharply told him, If he did not immediately depart, he would cause him to be sent to the House of Correction ; calling him a lazy idle fellow. — On this he got up, after falling two or three times through faintness for want of food, and making a bow, told him, he was a poor country fellow, in a starving condition, and if that he might be put in a way, he would refuse no labour; if it were only for victuals. This raised a Christian compassion in the merchant towards him, and then wanting a scul-



lion immediately ordered one of his servants to take him in, and give him some food, until he should give orders how he should be employed. And so he was feasted to his great refreshment.



### CH A P, III.

Of Mrs. Alice putting him under the Cook, with her cruel Usage to him, and Mrs. Alice's interposition in his Favour.

**T**HIS was the first step of providence to raise him to what in time made him the City's Glory, and the Nation's Wonder. But he meets with many difficulties; for the servants made sport of him, and the ill-natured cook told him, you are to come under me, so look sharp, clean the spits and the dripping-pan, make the fires, wind up the jack, and nimbly do all other scullery work that I may set you about, or else I will break your head with my ladle, and kick you about like a foot-ball.

This was cold comfort, but better than starving, and what gave him a beam of

of Mrs. Alice his master's daughter, who hearing her father had entertained a new servant, came to see him, and took compassion on him, ordered that he should be kindly used. After he had discoursed with him about his kindred and method of life, and found his answers ingenious, she ordered him some cast off garments, and that he should be cleaned and appear like a servant in the house. Then she went to her parents, and gave them her opinion of this stranger, which pleased them well, saying, he looks like a serviceable fellow to do kitchen drudgery, run on errands, clean shoes, and do such other things as the rest of their servants think beneath them. By this he was confirmed in his place, and a flock bed prepared in the garret for him. These conditions pleased him, and he shewed great diligence in the work, rising early and sitting up late, leaving nothing undone that he could do. But his being mostly under the cook-maid, she gave him four saucée to these little sweets; for she being of a morose temper, used her authority beyond reason; so that to keep in the family, he went with many a broken head, beating

it patiently ; and the more he tried with good words to dissuade her from her cruelty, the more she insulted him, and not only abused him, but frequently complained against him, endeavouring to get him turned out of his service ; but Mrs. Alice hearing of her usage, interposed in his favour, so that she should not prevail against him.



### C H A P. III.

Of his being troubled with Vermin in his Garret ; of his buying a Cat to destroy them ; and of his sending her for a Venture Abroad.

**T**HIS was not the only misery he suffered, for lying in a place for a long time unfrequented such abundance of rats and mice had bred there, that were almost astroublesome by night, as the cook was by day, running over his face ; and disturbing him with their squeaking ; so that he knew not what to think of his condition, or how to mend it. After many disquieting thoughts, he at last comforted himself with the hopes that the

cook might soon marry or die, or quit her service; and as for rats and mice, a cat would be an effectual remedy against them. Soon after a merchant came to dinner, and it raining exceedingly, he staid all night, whose shoes Whittington having cleaned, and presented at his chamber-door, he gave him a penny. This stock he improved, for going along the street of an errand, he saw a woman with a cat under her arm; so he desired to know the price of it. The woman praised it for a good mouser, and told him six pence; but he declaring that a penny was all his stock, she let him have it. — This he brought home, and kept in a box all day, lest the cook should kill her if she came into the kitchen; and at night to set her to work for her living. — Puss delivered him from one plague, but the other remained, though not for many years.

It was a custom with the worthy merchant Mr. Hugh Fitz Warren, that God might give him a greater blessing to his endeavours, to call all his servants together when he sent out a ship, and caused every one to venture something in it, to



try their fortune ; for which they was to pay nothing for freight or custom.

Now all but Whittington appeared and brought things according to their abilities,



but Mr. Alice being by, and supposing that poverty made him decline coming, she ordered him to be called : on which he made several excuses ; however, being constrained to come, he fell upon his knees, desiring them not to jeer a poor simple fellow in expectation that he was going to turn merchant ; since all that he could lay claim to as his own, was but a

poor Cat, which he had bought for one penny he had given him for cleaning shoes which had much befriended him in keeping the rats and mice from him. — Upon this Mrs. Alice proffered to lay something down for him ; but her father told her, The custom was, it must be his own which he ventured, and ordered him to fetch his Cat, which he did, but with great reluctance, fancying nothing could come of it, and with some tears delivered her to the master of the ship, which was called the Unicorn, and was fell down to Black Wall, in order to proceed on her voyage.



#### C H A P I V.

Of Whittington's Elopement on Allhal-low's Day; and his Return on hearing Bow Bells ring ; and of the Disposal of the Cat by the Factor Abroad.

**T**HE cook-maid, who little thought how advantageous Whittington's Cat would prove, when she did not scold at him would jeer him about his grand

adventure, and led him such a life, that he grew weary of enduring it, and little expecting what ensued, resolved rather to try Dame Fortune, than live in such torment. And so having packed up his bundle over night, got out early on All-hallow's day, intending to ramble the country. But as he went through Moor-fields, he began to have pensive thoughts, and his resolutions began to fail; however, on he went to Holloway, and sat down there to consider of the matter; when on a sudden Bow Bells began to ring a merry peal. He listening, fancied they called him back from his intended journey, and promised him the good fortune that afterwards befel him, imagining that they expressed,

Turn again Whittington,  
Lord Mayor of London.

This was a happy thought for him, as it made so great an impression on him, that finding it early, and that he might be back before the family was stirring, he delayed not, and all things answered his expectation; for having left the door ajar, he crept softly in, and got to his usual drudgery.

During this time, the ship in which the Cat was, by contrary winds was driven on the coast of Barbary, inhabited by the Moors, unknown to the English; but finding the people courteous, the master and factor traded with them; so bringing their wares of sundry sorts upon the decks, and opening them they pleased them so well, that the news was carried to the King, who sent for patterns, with which he was so pleased, that he sent for the factor to his palace. Their entertainment, according to custom, was on the floor, covered with carpets, interwoven with gold and silver, cross-legged. This kind of table was no sooner covered with various dishes, but the scent drew together a great number of rats and mice; who devoured all that came in their way; which surprised the factor, who asked the Nobles, If these vermin were not offensive.—O said they, very much so, as his Majesty would give half his revenue to be freed from them; for they are not only offensive at his table, but his chamber and bed are so trouhled with them, that he is always watched for fear of mischief.—The Factor then remembered Whitting-



ton's Cat, and rejoicing at the occasion, told them he had an English beast in the ship, who would rid all the court of them quickly. The King, overjoyed at hearing the good news, and being so anxious to be freed from those vermin, which so much spoiled his pleasure, disturbed his mind, and made all his enjoyments dissatisfactory and burdensome, desired to see this surprising creature; saying, for such a thing, I will load your ship with gold, diamonds, and pearls.—This large offer made the master endeavour the more to enhance the Cat's merits, saying she is the most admirable creature in the world, and I cannot spare her, for she keeps my ship clear of them, otherwise they would destroy all my goods. — But his Majesty would take no denial, saying, No price shall part us.—The Cat being sent for, and the tables being spread, the vermin came as before.—Then sitting her on the table, she fell to it immediately, and killed and scattered them all in a trice; then she came purring and curling up her tail to the King and Queen, as if she asked a reward for her service; whilst they

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admired her, protesting it was the finest



diversion they had ever seen.



### C H A P. V.

Of the Riches received for the Cat; the Unbelief of Whittington on their Arrival; and of his Liberality to some of his Fellow Servants.

**T**HE Moorish King was so pleased with the Cat, especially when the

master told him she was with young, and would stock the whole country, that he gave ten times more for the Cat than all the freight besides.—So they sailed with a fair wind, and arrived safe at Black-Wall, being the richest ship that ever came into England. The master taking the cabinet of Jewels with him on shore, (they being too rich a prize to be left on board) and presented his bill of lading to Mr. Fitz-Warren, who praised God for such a prosperous voyage. But when he called all his servants, to give each their due, the master shewed him the cabinet of pearls and Jewels ; the sight of which much surprised him ; but on being told it was all for Whittington's Cat, he said God forbid that I should deprive him of one farthing of it ; and so he sent for him by the title of Mr. Whittington, who was then in the kitchen cleaning of pots and spits. Being told he must come to his master, he made several excuses ; but being urged to go, he at length came to the door, and there stood scringing and scraping, scrupling to enter, till the merchant commanded him in, and ordered a chair to be immediately set for him ; on which

he thinking they intended to make sport with him, fell upon his knees, and with tears in his eyes besought them not to mock a simple fellow, who meant none of them any harm. Mr. Fitz-Warren, raising him up, said, Indeed, Mr. Whittington, we are serious with you, for in estate at this instant, you are an abler man than myself, and then gave him the vast riches, which amounted to three hundred thousand pounds ;—an immense sum in those days.

At length being persuaded to believe, he fell upon his knees, and praised Almighty God, who hath vouchsafed to behold so poor a creature in the midst of his misery. Then turning to his master, he laid his riches at his feet ; but he said, No, Mr. Whittington, God forbid I should take so much as a ducat from you, may it be a comfort to you. Then he turned to Mrs. Alice, but she also refused it ; upon which, bowing low, he said unto her, Madam, whenever you please to make choice of a husband, I will make you the greatest fortune in the world.

Upon this he began to distribute his bounty to his fellow servants, giving even



his mortal enemy the cook one hundred pounds for her portion ; she saying, She was in her passion, he freely forgave her. He also distributed his bounty very plentifully to all the ship's crew.



## C H A P. VI.

Of Mr. Whittington's comely Person and Department ; of Mrs. Alice's falling in Love with him, and marrying him ; and of his being Sheriff of London.

**U**PON this change the haberdashers, drapers, taylors, and sempstresses, were set to work to furnish Mr. Whittington with fine cloaths, and all things answerable to his fortune. Being dressed, he appeared a very comely person, inso-much that Mrs. Alice began to lay her eyes upon him. Now her father seeing this, intended a match for them, looking upon him to be a fortunate man. He also took him to the Royal Exchange, to see the customs of the merchants, where he was no sooner known, but they came to welcome him into their society.—Soon

after a match was proposed between him and his master's daughter, when he excused himself on account of the meaness of his birth ; but that objection being removed by his present worth, it was soon agreed on, and the Lord Mayor and Aldermen invited to the wedding.

After the honey-moon was over, his father-in-law asked him what employment he would follow? whereupon he replied, He should think of that of a Merchant.—So they joined together in partnership, and both grew immensely rich.

Though Fortune had thus bountifully smiled upon the subject of our history, who was far from pride, yet merry, which made his company and acquaintance courted by all ; and in a short time he was nominated Sheriff of London, in the year 1040, Sir John Haddle then being Lord-Mayor.



## C H A P. VII.

Of his being thrice Lord Mayor, his  
Entertainment of Henry V. and his  
Death, Burial, &c.



**T**HUS he grew in riches and fame,  
being greatly beloved by all, espe-  
cially the poor, whose hunger he always  
supplied,

In four years he was chose Lord Mayor  
in which office he behaved with such jus-  
tice and prudence, that he was chose in  
the same office twice afterwards. In the  
last year he entertained King Henry V.  
after his conquest of France, and his  
Queen at Guildhall, in such a very grand  
manner, that he was pleased to say, Never  
Prince had such a subject; and conferred  
upon him the honour of Knighthood.—

At this entertainment the King particularly praised the fire, which was made of choice wood, mixed with mace cinnamon, and all other spices; on which Sir



Richard said, he would endeavour to make one still more agreeable to his Majesty, and immediately tore and threw into the fire the King's bond for 10,000 marks due to the company of Mercers, 2500 to the Chamber of London; 2000 to the Grocers; to the Merchants, Staplers, Goldsmiths, Haberdashers, Vintners, Brewers, and Bakers, 3000 marks each. All these said Sir Richard, with divers others, lent for the payment of your soldiers in France I have taken in and discharged, to the amount of 60,0000 sterling; can your Majesty wish to see such another sight?



The King and Nobles were struck dumb with surprise at his wealth and liberality.

Sir Richard spent the rest of his days honoured by the rich, and beloved by the poor. He had by his wife two sons and two daughters, some of whose posterity are worthy citizens. He built many charitable houses, also a church in Vintry-Ward, dedicated to St. Michael, adding a college to it, founded to St. Mary, with a yearly allowance for poor scholars; near which he erected an hospital called God's House, and well endowed it. There he caused his father and mother-in-law to be buried, and left room for himself and his wife, when death should call them. He built Newgate, a place for criminals. He gave large sums to Bartholomew's hospital, and to many other charitable uses.

Dame Alice his wife died in the sixty-third year of her age, after which he would not marry, though he outlived her near twenty years.—In the conclusion he was buried in the place aforesaid, leaving a good name to posterity; and the following epitaph was written on their tomb, and continued perfect till destroyed by the Fire of London.

## Their E P I T A P H:

H E R E lies Sir Richard Whittington,  
Thrice Mayor,

And his dear Wife, a virtuous loving pair,  
Him fortunerais'd to be belov'd and great  
By the adventure only of a Cat.

Let none that read it of God's love despair,  
Who trusts in him, he will of them take  
care ;

But growing rich, chuse humbleness not  
pride, (guide.

Let these dead virtuous person be your



## A S O N G on

## Sir Richard Whittington.

H E R E I must tell the praise of worthy Whit-  
tington,

Known to be in his days Lord-Mayor of London.

But of poor parents born was he, we hear,

And in his youth brought up in Somersetshire

Poorly then up to London came this simple lad,

And with a merchant soon a dwelling had :

And in the kitchen plac'd, a scullion for to be,

And a long time he pass'd his labour druggingly.

His daily labour was turning spits at the fire,

To scour pots for a poor scullion's hire.

Meat and drink his pay, of coin he had no store,

And to run away in secret thus he bore :

So from the merchant Whittington secretly  
 Into the country run, to purchase liberty.  
 But as he went along in a fine summer's morn,  
 London bells sweetly rung, Turn again Whittington  
 Evermore sounding so, Turn again Whittington,  
 For thou in time shalt be Lord-mayor of London,  
 Whereupon back came Whittington with speed,  
 A servant to remain, as the Lord had decreed.  
 Still blessed be the bells, this was the daily song,  
 That my Good fortune tell; most sweetly have  
 they rung.

If God so favours me, I will not be unkind,  
 London my Love shall see, and my bounty find.  
 But for this happy chance, this scullion had a ear,  
 That did his fame advance, and him wealth go.  
 Whittington had no more but his poor cat then,  
 Which to the ship he bore like a valiant man.  
 Venturing the same, says he, I may get store of gold  
 And the Mayor of London be, the bells have me tol,  
 Whittington's merchandize carried unto the land,  
 Troubled with rats and mice as we do understand,  
 The king who there reign'd, as at dinner sat,  
 Daily in fear remain'd of many a mouse and rat:  
 Meat that on trenchers lay, no way could they keep  
 safe,

But by rats torn away, fearing no whip or staff.  
 Hereupon they brought, Whittington's fine cat,  
 By the king was bought, heaps of gold given for that.  
 Home again they hie, with their ship laden so,  
 Whittington's wealth by his cat began to go.  
 A scullion's life he forsook, to be a merchant good,  
 And soon began to look how his credit stood.  
 After he was chose Sheriff of the city we hear,  
 And then quickly rose, as it doth appear.  
 For the citys grace, Sir Richard Whittington,  
 Came to be in his days thrice Lord Mayor of London.

His Fame to advance, thousands he lent the king  
To maintain war in France, glory from thence  
bring.

And after a feast, which he the King did make,  
He burnt the note in Jest, and would no money take  
Prisoners cherish'd were, widows comfort found  
Good deeds far and near by him were done,  
Whittington's College is one of his charities,  
Newgate he built, where many prisoner lies.  
Many more deeds were done by Whittington,  
Which joy and comfort bring to those that look on.  
Somerfet, thou hast bred the flower of charity,  
Altho' he's dead and gone, yet he lives lastingly.  
Call him back no more to live in London,  
Those bells that call'd him back, Turn again  
Whittington.

F I N I S.

